

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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HOUSE PASSES MOSES PLAN TO HELP OFFENDERS BACK INTO SOCIETY

INDIANAPOLIS – Taking advantage of a plan conceived in part by State Rep. Win Moses (D-Fort Wayne), more counties across Indiana would gain the ability to help offenders return to being productive members of society, thanks to legislation co-sponsored by the lawmaker that was approved today in the Indiana House.

Senate Bill 523, which now returns to the Indiana Senate for concurrence with changes made in the House, would make permanent a temporary law sponsored by Moses in 2003. This law enables certain drug offenders who participate in a court re-entry program to receive food stamps or temporary assistance for needy families (TANF).

"Allen County is the only place in Indiana that has a court re-entry program, and it has proven to be a remarkable success since being established four years ago," Moses said.

"Offenders are allowed to leave prison ahead of time, and while they are still under house arrest, they can enter into a series of programs that enable them to integrate back into society," he continued. "These services include such things as family counseling, workforce development training to get a new job and even assistance to obtain a GED or attend college-level courses."

Since Allen County began its program, Moses said it has reduced the rate of recidivism by participants to around 20 percent, meaning nearly 80 percent have succeeded in avoiding a return to a life of crime.

"The legislation I sponsored two years ago expanded the types of benefits that could become available for people who were able to stick with the program," Moses said. "If they are able to maintain their commitment and stay away from a life of crime, we want these people and their families to have every opportunity to make new lives for themselves and try to benefit their communities."

"It is a tribute to far-sighted individuals like Fort Wayne Mayor Graham Richard and Allen Superior Court Judge Allen Surbeck that this program has succeeded to the extent that it has," he noted. "As reports about overcrowded prisons gain more attention, we need to be vigilant in pursuing community corrections options that enable reformed prisoners to become productive members of society and reduce costs for taxpayers."

By making it easier for program participants to receive benefits from food stamps or TANF, Moses said it would encourage more counties in Indiana to examine the possibility of enacting their own court re-entry programs.

"Allen County's successes can be repeated throughout Indiana if there are visionary public officials willing to take the time to investigate court re-entry programs and committed to seeing that those programs work," Moses said. "Through the provisions of Senate Bill 523, we can give officials across this state the tools they need to start their own court re-entry programs. I am hopeful that we will be able to pass this legislation in a timely fashion and give these reforms a chance to expand in Indiana."

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This news release can be accessed on the Internet at www.IN.gov/H81